



HIPAA AND THE SMALL OFFICE

What is this HIPPO thing?



Docs and Office Managers

- Docs know something is coming but don't really understand what it is.
- It's sufficiently far off that they are not paying attention.
- Like Y2K there will be a last minute rush to comply.
- Office managers are managing HIPAA at this point.



Who Is Doing What

- HIPAA has spawned an industry.
- Everyone wants to sell you something to help you comply.
- Private sector has books, newsletters, videos, CDs, websites, e-mail news, teleconferences.
- HIPAA-CS.com example of private sector program.



Who Is Doing What Continued

- Professional Associations are doing HIPAA education with newsletters, HIPAA “Tips” on their web sites, teleconferences, printed material which they sell for a modest fee.
- Hospitals, IPAs, Insurers, Medicaid, Medicare all are offering HIPAA help for no fee to affiliated physician practices.



Wide Variation In Interpretation

- On one listserve a doctor reported that his hospital offered a HIPAA audit of his office and advised encasing his computer server in a locked metal box to prevent theft of the server and thus the data within.
- Creates confusion about just what HIPAA means.



Some Things We Have Done Already

- Eliminated the sign-in clipboard.
- Put shredder in every doctor's room and in the business office.
- Put up signs indicating staff only area.
- Moving towards eliminating paper in the office with scanning program and electronic medical record.



Under Desk Shredder





Lab Sign





More Things We Do

- Talked to our staff about what HIPAA is and emphasize respecting patient privacy.
- Discourage hallway conversation.
- Keep voices low in unavoidable open areas.
- When putting paper charts in rack, turn them so that names can't be seen by patients.
- Use child's first name with number to identify what room they are in.



More Things We Do (2)

- Shut the door when talking with a patient, examining a patient, talking to a patient on the phone (clinical staff).
- Put HIV results in a separate notebook.
- Call attention to other entities when obvious privacy is breached. Ex. ER and Telephone Triage Service faxes information on more than one patient on the same sheet.



More Things We Do (3)

- Never leave medical information on an answering machine.
- Published rules on our website, www.pediatrichealthcare.com for e-mail.
- Migrating to secure website for all electronic communication with the office.
- Considering additional privacy education from HIPAA-CS.



Problem Areas

- Open front desk area. No plans to enclose it.
- Paper charts in open shelving. New locked shelving unaffordable. Transition to full use of EMR will solve problem.
- Paper charts on doctor's desks in same room as patient exam. Need to secure charts until EMR transition is complete.





Needs For Small Practices

- Accurate interpretation of the rules with multiple examples relevant for small offices.
- Simple check lists with suggestions of how to come into compliance.
- Packet of forms needed for notifications and patient information.
- Affordable price.